



LANDWORKERS' ALLIANCE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND WINTER SHINDIG 2019

- REPORT AND MINUTES -



Friday 22nd November - Monday 25th November 2019
Castle Head Field Studies Centre, Grange over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 6QT
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THE LANDWORKERS' ALLIANCE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND WINTER SHINDIG 2019

To view the AGM programme of events please [click here](#).

In November 2019 we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the beautiful hills of Cumbria, welcoming over 125 landworkers and allies, and musicians and storytellers. As our AGMs grows each year, our event organising is being fine tuned to make it a smoother, more participatory and relaxed gathering.

At our 2019 AGM we had a fantastic crew of facilitators, organisers and the Landworkers' Alliance 'vibesmiths' who worked hard in supporting everyone to hold the space, facilitate sessions, and create the all important social vibes essential to working hard! We were also committed to working to make LWA events **intergenerational and this year we welcome a great gang of the youngest of generations and the wisdom they bring to the gathering.**

We hosted several public debates and discussions on key issues affecting food, farming and land use. We heard about the work that is taking place in northern England and the UK to protect assets of community value and the future of the uplands, holding debates and strategic discussions about how we develop our campaigns and positions on these.

In addition to plenary presentations and debates we had an exciting array of member led sessions and sectoral organising spaces throughout the weekend ranging from discussions about Farming, Forestry and Feminism, Co-ops and Bioregions, Mobilizing for COP 26 in Glasgow, Food and Social Justice, Climate Chaos and Land use and many more. We also spent time in our sectors, branches and regions strategizing how we wanted to organise and develop the Landworkers' Alliance as a union at a local grassroots level.

The Landworkers' Alliance Annual General Meeting and Winter Shindig is one of our most important gatherings each year as we come together as land based workers and allies together from across the UK, collectively set our work agenda for the following year, organise skill shares and exchanges, elect our coordinating group, strategise around the development of the union, and work **hard and party hard as we build and strengthen a movement for food, farming and climate justice!**

This write up and report of our AGM contains the minutes and notes of the multiple workshops, presentations and discussions that were held throughout the weekend and plans and actions for 2020. If you have any questions or would like to find out more about any of the sessions and how to get involved in any of the working groups please contact us at info@landworkersalliance.org.uk

**In solidarity,
The Landworkers' Alliance**

Day 1 : Saturday 23rd November

Session 1: WELCOME CELEBRATION, INTRODUCTIONS AND ROUND UP OF THE YEAR

This session included a welcome celebration, ice breakers, housekeeping and a round up of the year looking back on key activities, events, programmes and achievements of the Landworkers' Alliance in 2019.

- [View the power point presentation here.](#)

Session 2: THE LANDWORKERS' ALLIANCE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This session included a presentation of the LWA's accounts and the five year strategic development plan we are working on to significantly increase our reach and influence.

We will also held a discussion and vote on proposed amendments to the LWA's article of association to help us grow into a bigger and better union.

New members standing to join the Coordinating Group presented themselves at the AGM for election and the voting and ballot box opened and stayed open until 2pm on Sunday 23rd November.

- [View the power point presentation here.](#)
- [Read the minutes here.](#)

Session 3: FARMING, FORESTRY AND FEMINISM: *who works the land, who is visible and why?*

An open discussion space was held to share experiences as women working in land based industries and the successes and obstacles faced. The discussion explored experiences including but not limited to, issues around visibility and various forms of emotional and care labour on and off the land.

- [Read the notes from the session here.](#)

Session 4: BRANCH AND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (PRESENTATIONS AND PROPOSALS)

The Regional Assembly was a key part of the weekend, bringing LWA members from across the UK together to learn how each region is organising at a grassroots level and to get ideas and inspiration from each other. The presentations were followed by regional break-out groups to develop future plans and programs in each region.

This year we will also held a discussion on creating a LWA UK wide assembly. This would bring together representatives from the LWA's regions, branches, sectors and working groups with staff and the coordinating group to meet bi-annually. This assembly will help us improve our organising and communication across the LWA and help us improve our influence, power and reach. This proposal was based on the governance model used by Confederation Paysanne, the French farming union.

- [View presentation and powerpoint of the membership here.](#)
- [View presentation and powerpoint of the proposal for an organisers assembly here.](#)
- [Read writes up and notes here for regional and branch meetings : a. LWA Cymru - b. LWA Scotland - c. LWA England: South West - London - Midlands - South East and North](#)

Day 2 : Sunday 23rd November

SUNDAY SESSIONS AND LANDWORKERS' EXCHANGES.

We have 10 fantastic sessions organised and led by LWA members on the Sunday morning.

SESSION ONE: FIBERS AND FOOD / FASHION AND FARMING

Wool, leather and flax stems are too often seen as byproducts of food production systems rather than valuable resources in their own right. Moreover, the quality of UK fibres has been significantly compromised over the last fifty years due to prioritisation of genetic selection for meat production and yield. This workshop will call on participants to explore the parallels between food and fibre farming and how the two systems could be better connected.

With: Babs from [Bristol Cloth](#) (The UK's first regenerative agriculture textile system, based entirely within the UK, using the [Fibershed](#) model) and Emma from the [Fibershed](#) will be leading this session

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION TWO: CLIMATE, LAND-USE AND NET ZERO

Everyone-ish agrees we're in a climate emergency - but what does that mean for land use? What would the landscape look like if we achieved UK net zero emissions? Is the NFU's plan for netzero 2040 any good? What would a LWA 'policy' on addressing climate issues look like? And how could we win? Join a discussion on these issues and more.....

With: Oli Rodker (Landworkers' Alliance and Ecological Land Co-operative).

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION THREE: CO-OPS AND BIO REGIONS: *An economic, social model to underpin the agroecology movement?*

Agroecological Cooperatives (AE) are a model to join up production, certification, education, marketing, distribution resource sharing and investment to provide a joined up to food access. This will be an opportunity to discuss and plan together following a proposal on how creating participatory guarantee systems for regional certification can link to all of the above, take the pressure off producers and drive new, local investment into agroecology by sharing our resources and becoming more than the sum of our parts.

With: Rupert Dunn (Landworkers' Alliance Cymru and Torth Y Tir)

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION FOUR: LAND SKILLS FESTIVALS AND LANDWORKERS' EXCHANGES.

The Landworkers' Alliance is organising a land skills festival next year. Where will it be? What would you like to see? Workshops, music, skill-shares, food? We need help to make this become a cracking party, not to be missed. An open workshop to bring people together to explore ideas for the event.

With: Jyoti Fernandes, Humphrey Lloyd and Helen Starr Keddle (all Landworkers' Alliance)

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION FIVE: SPECTACULAR SPREADSHEET (or, how to spend more time outdoors).

Organiclea and Sutton Community Farm use spreadsheets which can easily compile orders into a harvest list, create invoices for customers, order for the box scheme, record produce yields and more. Join us to find out how you too can spend less time sitting at a computer, or share your spreadsheet skills. Bring examples and join us to share your spreadsheet skills!

With: Marlene (Organiclea) and Joris (Sutton Community Farm)

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION SIX: HEALTH AND SAFETY ON YOUR FARM/WOODLANDS

An open discussions and information sharing session about why good health and safety systems are essential and how looking after ourselves is vital as land based workers.

With: Jason Brooks (Ed's Veg) and representatives from the LWA Woody Branch.

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION SEVEN: EXPLORING A VEGANISM BASED ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Industrial Food System can easily incorporate and dilute the politics of individual food choices, and so currently many corporations are now providing vegan products, often produced in extractive ways that damage communities, ecologies and climate resilience around the world - in similar ways as industrial livestock systems do. This session will be hosted by vegan LWA members who are involved in small scale agro ecological and community based food production, and we will explore how can we work towards a veganism based on food sovereignty which encompasses these politics and works within the framework of social justice.

Please note: *This is a space for visioning what a veganism based on food sovereignty could look like, and is not a debate between the merits of veganism vs animal agriculture.*

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION EIGHT: FARMING, FOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

This participatory session is an exploration of the connections between food, farming and social justice in the UK. Come and be part of a conversation that is asking how we can build food and farming systems that are both rooted in, and progress, social justice.

With: Kate Briton (Landworkers' Alliance), Beth Stewart (Landworkers' Alliance) and Dee Woods (Landworkers' Alliance / Community Food Growers Network)

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION NINE : MOBILIZING FOR COP26 GLASGOW

The United Nations Conference COP 26 conference on Climate Change will be coming to Glasgow in November 2020, and Civil Society organisations are beginning to organise around this. This will be an open discussion around what thoughts and ideas people have for what the LWA and Via Campesina could do around the COP 26 in Glasgow and explore what kind of political and movement building opportunities it could bring.

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION TEN : HOW CAN LAND BASED WORKERS AND RESEARCHERS BETTER COLLABORATE?

We would like to gather together a co-inquiry group on agroecological learning to collectively form our research agendas and get useful input on how we as researchers can best work with the Landworkers' Alliance. The idea is that as much as possible land based workers are shaping the research, they can be active participants in the projects and the research is useful for the movement. *With: Alice Taherzadeh (Cardiff University) and Chris Maughan (Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience)*

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION ELEVEN: THE LANDWORKERS' ALLIANCE LGBTQIA+ GATHERING

Landworkers' Alliance LGBTQIA+ group will host a discussion by and for LGBTQIA+ land workers and allies. This interactive session aims to create a welcoming space in which to share personal experiences, successes and challenges that we face in our land-based work. LGBTQIA+ folks hope to build a sense of solidarity and support for each other and to begin building a base from which to make LGBTQIA+ folks more visible within land-based work. Come listen in and please feel welcome to bring your own story to share if you fancy.

- [Read writes up and notes here](#)

SESSION TWELVE: SECTOR SESSIONS ASSEMBLY AND PRESENTATION

We will be holding sector based meetings for members and supporters working in dairy, arable, livestock, forestry, horticulture and fibres. These sessions are aimed at exploring how we want to organise and support each other within our sectors both politically and practically from skills shares, knowledge exchanges, marketing co-operatives and events to political campaigning and actions. .

- [Read writes up and notes below:](#)

SECTOR SESSIONS

- [Horticulture \(policy, training and exchange, events and actions\)](#)
- [Woodland and forestry](#)
- [Livestock and dairy](#)
- [Fibres](#)
- [Arable](#)

SESSION THIRTEEN: LWA COORDINATION GROUP ELECTIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CLOSING

This session is key to the entire running of the LWA as this is the time in the year where UK Coordinating Group members stand-down, stand for re-election and get elected to coordinating committee of the union. It is essential everyone attending the weekend is present!

We will also be holding closing ceremony to bring us together to share reflections, thoughts, songs and poetry.

- [Read the minutes here.](#)